

News:

Nicaragua Up-date: Sr. Marlene de Nardo, SNDN, Assistant to the Superior General spoke to the nine people representing six societies who met on Nov.10, 1983 at Sedos to share their concern about recent developments in Nicaragua. They also shared information from the recent meeting on Nicaragua of the Leaders Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) held in Chicago, USA, at which there were representatives of twenty-one Religious Societies of Women. The Conference is in constant contact with the Nicaraguan situation.

The group meeting in Sedos will attempt to pool information and co-ordinate contacts with their members working in Nicaragua. For further information contact Sr. Marlene de Nardo, SNDN, Tel. 892.24.73 or Sedos, 57.13.50.

South Africa Up-date: Fr. Ignaz Dekkers CSSR, Assistant to the Superior General addressed a group of twenty representing twelve Societies working in South Africa. Fr. Emmanuel Rakaki of Bloemfontein Diocese was present. Fr. Dekkers shared his impressions of the Country and the role of the Church with particular reference to apartheid. There is apparent evidence of some slight movement towards a change in applying the more rigid forms of the policy but the support of the Dutch Reformed Church and of some other Christians including some Catholics remains a scandal.

The leadership of Archbishop Hurley in opposing apartheid places him and the Church in a constant situation of tension. The discussion which followed underlined the difficulty of an authentic presentation of the Christian message in these circumstances. There is a drift towards violence as the only remaining possible answer to the institutionalised violence of apartheid.

The School Sisters of St. Francis who attended the meeting are researching a possible work in South Africa or elsewhere in Africa.

The group will keep in contact. Further information available from Sedos.

Sedos Executive Committee met on November 16, 1983.

Items of Interest:

1. Seminar: Dialogue with Post Christians. The meeting assessed the Seminar at which there were seventy participants representing over thirty Societies. This brings to a conclusion the present series of Seminars on Dialogue. The speakers were excellent, participation, numerous and lively. The meeting widened horizons and revealed some valuable insights. The December 15 issue of SEDOS Bulletin will contain the report of the Seminar.
2. Seminar: Ministries for a dynamic Local Church: The Executive Committee confirmed that Fr. Bob Schreiter, C.P.S. will be one of the main speakers at the Seminar.
3. Annual General Assembly and Seminar: "Spirituality for Conflict":
It was confirmed that the Assembly will take place in the large hall at the FSC Generalate. Contributions for the day, including lunch, will be lire 7,000.
4. Date for Sedos Events for 1984 were approved and will be circulated.

 THE FUTURE OF MISSION

Simon E. Smith, S.J.

PART II

La prise de conscience de la signification de l'inculturation peut nous amener à examiner ce que nous entendons par foi, à accepter entièrement le pluralisme qui a toujours caractérisé l'Eglise catholique, à pratiquer le dialogue de façon à reconnaître l'arrogance effrayante qui a souvent caractérisé notre approche des autres religions, à nous rendre compte que le seul facteur important de notre spiritualité est la façon dont nous prenons part à la vie des pauvres.

In order to understand what I am trying to say, listen to this conversation I had a few years ago in Africa with a group of African theologians (I say African theologians, not theologians in Africa). When one speaks of inculturation in Africa, one has to recognize there the primacy of culture. We North Americans are accustomed to stress revelation or dogma or some other given thing when we speak of inculturation. But for Africans it is culture which is primary.

An African distinction: In any case, these Africans began by distinguishing faith from the faith. (I know it is difficult in French; one does not usually use the term "faith" without an article; but this conversation was actually in French!)

'The faith, said one, is what you missionaries brought us: a whole complex of Gospel, dogmas, symbols, practices, customs, and it was all wrapped up in your Western culture. As a matter of fact, we are very grateful for your gift, your activity, all that you have given us. The faith you brought us is precious and irreplaceable, but it is all the same something inevitably westernized. And we have to distinguish this gift which is the faith, from the act of faith (or faith itself) which is something quite other'.

'Faith (or the act of faith) means the experience of recognizing and accepting Jesus as my saviour, my mediator with the Father-God. And for me, an African, that experience of faith is different than yours. That is, simply as an African, I encounter, I experience Jesus in an African way, subtly different from you. Not better, not worse . . . just different! And when I try, as an African, to express my experience of faith, my fundamental encounter with Jesus, I cannot use your languages (English, French, Portuguese, Latin or Greek) because they cannot bear the subtlety of my experience. I cannot articulate the nuances of my profound experience of faith other than through my own indigenous language.'

Such a position relativizes our own thought about faith. It reminds us that we of the West do not possess all the truth, that we have passed (historically speaking) by way of the same route of a fundamental experience of encounter with Jesus, through the articulation of that experience in our own languages and the refining of our concepts and our terms during 20 centuries of Councils

and theological research. And these Africans ask of us the same right: to experience Jesus as Africans, to express that in their own terms, to articulate their experiences in their own languages and to **systemize** these articulations into truly African theologies.

It is not up to us, the missionaries, to deny them or contradict them. It is up to us to facilitate them in this very demanding task. We cannot do it ourselves because we are not Africans (nor Indians, nor Japanese, nor Latin Americans, etc.). We can help them by our ministry of support, furnishing them some means for reflection and research (books, courses, libraries, advanced studies) or for dissemination of ideas (communications media, conferences), etc. We can help them by our efforts to listen, to refine our own understanding of our own faith. And especially can we help them by our attitude of trust based on respect and love.

Not only an African phenomenon: I would add that the primacy of culture of which the Africans are the most aware and on which they insist the most, is not a purely African phenomenon. It exists also in Asia and Latin America, in India and the Pacific Islands. This search for authenticity, which the primacy of culture implies, was already underlined by Pope Paul VI in 1969 at Kampala where he said to the Africans:

"You can and you must be missionaries to yourselves; you can and you must have an African Christianity; we have need of your experience of negritude."

These key words have been repeated hundreds of times in Africa, even in the face of some efforts to restrain or even impede the process of inculturation, e.g. during recent visits to Africa or even in the three recent allocutions to Zairean bishops during their *ad limina* visits with the insistence on the control and centralization of the whole process by Rome.

Pluralism: But look at the African bishops who have asked at each Synod and at each reunion of SECAM the right to be and to remain Africans, the right to treat publicly and openly the most burning subjects for Africans: marriage, celibacy, healing, apostolate to nomads, etc. It comes down to a question of radically accepting today the pluralism which has always characterized the Catholic church. It is enough to be aware of the pluralism already present in the New Testament (i.e. the different ecclesiologies, Christologies, ethics of the Gospels, Acts, Epistles) as well as throughout the whole long history of theological development across the centuries . . . the Synods and Councils right up to today. The Catholic church is recognized among all Christians worldwide as the institution which is most supple, most pluralistic, which can embrace a truly formidable variety of theological expressions. Why then now, precisely in this period of such fertile blossoming of theology and of pluralistic rooting of faith why try to stop, to suffocate this opening so rich and enriching, so authentic and relativizing?

As for me, I have confidence that the Africans (and the Asians, Latin Americans, indigenous people of the whole world) will forge a Christianity truly Africanized or indigenized and during the process they will teach us to relativize our own faith which is already too westernized. Neither Rome nor we ourselves can play with culture or the inculturation of faith, because culture means identity and one should not play with the identity of someone else.

DIALOGUE

This dimension of relativizing pluralism reaches its peak in the consideration of dialogue or the encounter with the great religions. Despite the successive waves of missionaries sent to the Orient during at least four centuries, despite all our efforts to plant the church in India, China, Japan, Korea, etc., despite all our Christian propaganda about great successes there, the very simple fact is that we have failed. Indeed, there are thousands and thousands of Christians in India, China, etc., but in relation to the billions of people who live in these regions, there are only two percent - less than two percent - who profess the name of Jesus. Outside the Philippines, the proportion is only one percent!

This means that Christianity (and I am speaking here of all Christians, not just Catholics) in the Orient was, is, remains and will remain a minority, not a minority among pagans, but a believing minority among believing peoples. That is, the peoples of the East, whether Hindus, Buddhists or Muslims, already believe in God. Of course, they don't believe perhaps in Jesus Christ, but the one God is unique and the ways of believing in this one God differ. If we approach others supposing that they know nothing of God, that they are barbarians, pagans, that they are totally lacking in religion or faith (and that was, as a matter of fact, our approach not too long ago), we condemn ourselves not only to insulting others, but especially to contradicting, even perverting the work, the call and the approach of Jesus Christ in whose very name we approach others.

The striking fact which emerges from the efforts during the last decade, especially in India, to rethink our relations with the believers in the other great religions, is that God, the sole unique God, is already active among them . . . and don't forget that God's action is, by definition, *salvific*. In other words, God is already present among Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims, doing his own work, his "business," which is nothing less than salvation. If, then, God is already present and active, if God is already saving these people, what is our task?

The first task is to recognize God where he is: To open ourselves to learn from others how God operates among them, what are the signs of his presence, what are the nuances, the modalities, the characteristics of his identity which he reveals to others? There exists right there a source of fantastic enrichment for ourselves: to learn certain ways by which God communicates himself to men, ways perhaps unknown among us, to sensitize ourselves to the values and religious symbols which are not very appreciated among ourselves, to render ourselves more attentive to the immense variety of lines of communication between God and men, lines which he Himself has constructed!

Then, the second task is to share our own experiences and knowledge of God, of course by way of faith in Jesus Christ, but an experience and a knowledge already enriched and already a little relativized by the exchange already undertaken. What I am describing here is obviously what we call "dialogue". Dialogue supposes a fundamental openness of the two parties who exchange; it also supposes that there are no non-negotiable elements

or positions. Everything is put on the table; nothing is hidden. The parties to the dialogue search together for the truth; they search together for the ways God reveals himself to men of today.

But, you will say, God and especially Jesus are hardly negotiable! Obviously! But what we say and what we believe about God and Jesus are indeed negotiable and have been often negotiated! That's the whole history of the Councils and of Christian theologies across the centuries, - the search for God and his meaning for men of each epoch, the search for the ways by which God reveals himself to men whom he wishes to save. Of course, God has already revealed himself in Jesus Christ and we are very sure of this revelation. Of course! But God operates also today and for a long time among believers of other religions and it behooves us to learn from their experiences and clarifications.

Our frightening arrogance: The result of such an undertaking (already well underway in the East) is to recognize our frightening arrogance in supposing that the Catholic Church is the sole means of salvation, in supposing that God can save men solely through explicit faith in Jesus Christ, in supposing that our own western Christology and Soteriology are the only possibilities for explaining the saving action of God. People are already now, especially in India, engaged in the process of re-thinking, or re-doing our theories of salvation and of the meaning of Christ whether in Christianity or in the other religions. And all of that is properly the work of theologians, but what interests us here is the fact that it is already underway. They engage in this task with prudence, with many difficulties, with some uneasiness and especially despite some efforts to derail the project. But this new era of dialogue breathes a vision as large as Jesus', a deepening of our own faith, an enlarged sensitivity toward the work of God in our world and his desire to save all humanity in his own way.

SPIRITUALITY

As I said at the beginning of my remarks, I don't have much to say on the topic of a spirituality for the future. In so far as it is spirituality, it is not something that one creates or makes up in advance, put together from ideas, desires, thoughts, abstractions, etc., completely up in the air. On the contrary, it flows from the experience of God and of the Christian life lived and reflected upon. One cannot here in advance, then, describe a spirituality for the future of mission.

On the other hand, here at this Congress we have already perceived and sketched out some principal lines of the future of mission and it is enough for us now to gather together some of the key elements of our reflection which could serve us as both an outline of a spirituality and a general resumé of this presentation.

A Shared Life: As for myself, I would say that the factor, both material and spiritual, which can best express this new spirituality and the experience whence it comes would be that of *shared life* (back to basics!). A life shared among the poor, and really shared in the sense of mutual enrichment. I say this in contrast to a western spirituality which searches for God outside the normal life of men and

women. We are so accustomed to make retreats away, distancing ourselves from so-called "distractions," and looking for God in solitude, that we have unfortunately forgotten that God is there where one least expects him to be - that is, in the normal daily life of human beings, in the marketplace, in business, in interpersonal relations, in the sufferings of the poor, in dialogue, in crowds . . . where the way of the Cross is. We need, my friends, retreats of insertion, not of withdrawal. I am in no way opposing the necessity of prayer and of discovering God through his Son Jesus in silence and solitude, but we must complement our quest for God in isolation with an equally active and open search to find him where he actually is.

He works among the poor: He functions among men of other cultures who also search for him in their own way.

He is acting in every place where today's people are committed, where they approach others, share with others. Such a spirituality, open, free, humble, committed, displaced, gifted with respect and love of others, stretching itself out to horizons as broad as Jesus' own, is (and precisely for that reason alone) more worthy of Him.

Such a spirituality, open and cut off from our normal securities of isolation, protection, concern, fear, self-centeredness, is quite risky and dangerous . . . but who or what is in danger? Nothing but our closedness and our pettiness, our self-centeredness and self-sufficiency.

Ambiguity: Such a spirituality is full of ambiguity. Blessed be God! The world which He created is equally ambiguous! Human relations, oppressive structures, different cultures, various witnesses of God . . . everything is full of ambiguity. Ambiguity is the human condition (assumed and saved by Jesus Christ) as well as the very foundation of our search for God and therefore of our contemporary spirituality of mission.

The basic attitude to adopt, then, is to accept the danger, the challenge, the reality of ambiguity -- because that's the way God made it. Among us in the USA, in our very rich slang, there is an expression which sums up both the problematic of ambiguity and our attitude in the face of it. I'm not aware of an equivalent in French and so I'll have to give it to you in English We say "Hang loose!" Don't worry, feel free, have confidence, everything will settle down, give yourself some rope . . . Hang loose! God is there where one least expects Him . . . Hang loose! He loves us, He awaits us, He is full of surprises for us . . . Hang loose! The future is to be invented. It is already made! We looked for Him and lo, he was right in our midst . . . Hang loose!

RECONCILIATION AND INCULTURATION:
A NIGERIAN (IGBO) ORIENTATION

Eugene Elochukwu Uzukwu, CSSp.

En décrivant un rite de réconciliation traditionnel dans la culture Igbo, le Père Uzukwu énumère des éléments importants: le sens communautaire, la parole qui tue et sauve à la fois, la place du rite et de la participation et finalement la nécessité d'une célébration de réconciliation et de guérison. Il examine ensuite deux conclusions pour une théologie bien adaptée de la réconciliation.

The following reflections were put together in view of the Synod of Bishops, with its theme "Reconciliation and Penance in the Mission of the Church". Their aim is to offer some suggestions for research and discussion concerning inculturation as it applies to Igbo Christians in the matter of the sacrament of Penance.

THEOLOGY IN CONTEXT

Let us begin by emphasising the importance of inculturation as it applies to theology "in context". Every theology is contextual, and the disciples of so-called "universal theology" - by which is implicitly understood "western theology" - are not even listening to developments in contemporary western thought. Universal theology is a fairy tale. Paul Ricoeur, among others, has noted that the first presupposition of hermeneutics is that the interpreter is always standing on the terrain of a particular tradition and does not speak from no-where! H.-G Gadamer has stressed the role of what he calls "prejudice" in human knowing: we "know" when our particular traditional and experiential "bias" encounters the world in dialogue. Unfortunately those who would like to impose what they call a "universal" or "perennial" mode of thought rarely tell us their presuppositions: perhaps they are not even aware of them.

It is commonly said today that there is some kind of crisis in the sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation. Even the words seem to show this: while "Reconciliation" has been the favoured word since Vatican II, "Penance" is the name given to the sacrament in the Working Paper for the Synod. The fact that a Synod is going to pay special attention to the sacrament is another indication of the "crisis". The seriousness with which some local churches are treating this question is shown in the reply to the preparatory document, the "Lineamenta",¹ from the church in Chile. This is a synthesis² representing 2500 responses coming from as many parish communities. The Church in Igboland, and throughout Africa, should advert to the problem being raised by the particular context regarding the celebration of this sacrament.

A recent seminar on Reconciliation held in Enugu (26 April 1983) concentrated on how to deepen faith and internalise the reception of this sacrament. But the basic model is the existing church discipline which is overburdened by western individualism. The Seminar could accomplish very little because the contextual theological foundation is not there: theological work and pastoral response are done by proxy, merely repeating what others have done before. It is to be feared that the same flaw will diminish the relevance of the Synod of Bishops: at least this is the impression given by both the preparatory document and the working paper.

WHAT IS INCULTURATION?

Inculturation means taking a people, a culture, in a spirit of deep trust and then meeting this people, this culture, at the *depth level*, where the foundational questions of the world, man, God, the invisible hierarchies, life and death, etc., are posed. This depth level (sometimes called "structural history") is the base which generates the most predictable reactions of a people to crisis situations ("to be or not to be") - giving rise to *rites of passage*.

To inculturate Christianity into Africa would then mean a confrontation at depth level between *the fundamental message of Christianity* (Kingdom of God, Death-Resurrection of Jesus as it is carried by the living church community, which is the normative witnessing instrument given by Jesus, and by the irreplaceable New Testament, which is the reflection of the Jesus event in its effect on a group of people) and *the foundations of African life* (the questions of ultimate reality and meaning).

Confrontation: Such confrontation would necessarily yield a theological and pastoral orientation different from the present theology and pastoral policy among the Igbo. Brandishing a Gospel supposedly cut off from culture and philosophy (in the likeness of the early Barth), or arming oneself with the most recent ecclesiastical pronouncement on impediments (see the new code of canon law), does not alter the fact that *in crisis situations*, Igbo Christians act from the ground on which their life is based (Igbo tradition).

The clergy and religious are not excluded from this: the struggle for and exercise of power in the church could be an example.

Christianity incidental? This could imply, either that the message of Christ is *merely incidental* to the life of the Igbo when foundational questions of life and death arise. The numerical strength of the baptised is irrelevant in this matter. No: Igbo (and African) culture must be *evangelised*, even if it means disturbing our most cherished certainties. After all, this is what is meant by conversion, and Vatican II has stressed that conversion is an ongoing reality in all Christian life. But the confrontation between Gospel and culture must be *dialogical*: a dialectic of mutual acceptance and rejection.

THE GOSPEL OF RECONCILIATION AND IGBO RECONCILIATION IN CONFRONTATION

I shall briefly narrate a recently concluded traditional rite of reconciliation (1982-1983), the majority of participants being Christians, and the rite being presided over by a Catholic priest,

Rev. Dr. M. Nwabuisi. (I have Fr. Nwabuisi's permission to use this story, though the names of other participants are not mentioned.) Since 1975, the town of Ebe was divided into two factions, because a son of Ebe (X) was accused of receiving money for a piece of land given to the government. Factionalism cut across villages and families. Communication broke down. Litigation, stories of poisoning and sudden deaths were rife. In 1978, an abortive attempt was made by priests and religious of Ebe to effect a reconciliation.

Seeing the dangerous drift of affairs, an age group (*Ogbo Igwebuike*) from a village most affected decided to withdraw its support for any of the factions. Back from the United States (1982), Nwabuisi held talks with members of the factions, preached unity and reconciliation during church services, became convinced of X's innocence, and persuaded *Ogbo Igwebuike* of the innocence of X, which the members accepted before X (who could hardly contain himself for joy). *Ogbo Igwebuike* convinced their village of the innocence of X, who was then publicly declared innocent. But because of the serious wounds inflicted by this crisis on life in this village and other quarters of Ebe, the villagers declared that reconciliation must be effected before they could hold meetings and discussions with other villages.

The reconciliation was in the form of *igba ndu* (covenant). The terms are: no one should cause any bodily or spiritual harm to another, nor see harm coming and allow it to touch another; there will be no betrayal of a fellow villager. The Christians took the oath on the Bible, while adepts of ancestral religion swore on their cult symbols. The ceremony was preceded by a bible service and preaching, and the ritual breaking and eating of the kola-nut. When this reconciliation ritual was concluded with a meal, villagers could eat together, celebrate the taking of *ozo* title (when someone is initiated into a leadership position in the clan) together, and so on.

STRUCTURES WHICH ARE
RELEVANT IN THIS IGBO RECONCILIATION RITUAL:

- (1) Community: Whether as individual villages or a whole town, the consciousness of being a people with a common origin and purpose, protected by the same *Land* is to the fore. The suspicion that X was unfaithful to this reality led to factionalism; and the fear that the community would disintegrate, leading to a "groundless" life (belonging to nowhere) is a factor motivating dialogue and reconciliation. Belonging to the Christian community of itself provided no sufficient motive for reconciliation: Christian celebrations went on throughout the period of the crisis, but the crisis persisted.
- (2) Word: It kills and saves! It led to factionalism - the word of (false) accusation - and to reconciliation - word of discourse between Nwabuisi and the factions, word declaring X innocent, word of X confessing his innocence, word of prayer accompanying the breaking of the kola-nut, word of the Bible and preaching, etc. The word is performative and efficacious.
- (3) Rite and participation. The rite heals the wounds and helps the community to rediscover its purpose. There is a high level of participation in which community solidarity beautifully intertwines with personal commitment - dialogue, discussion of reconciliation motifs in plenary assembly, internalisation of the common purpose by each person through oath-taking.

(4) Healing celebration: From the ritual pre-oath kola-nut to the concluding meal, celebrative healing is symbolised. The subsequent eating together and doing things together demonstrates the effectiveness of the ritual process.

FOR A CONTEXTUAL (IGBO) THEOLOGY OF RECONCILIATION

Here there is no question of merely selecting elements to be saved or uplifted by Christianity: rather one should insist on the experience of an encounter with the veiling-unveiling God of reconciliation, a God encountered as promise and hope, as the eschatological, ultimate reality in every culture and in the dialogue between cultures. A contextual theology of reconciliation based on the meeting between Christianity Igbo culture examines:

- (a) The place of reconciliation in the Igbo world and the Gospel message.
- (b) The confrontation between elements structural to the Igbo and the Christian experiences of reconciliation, with all their attendant historical developments. Here there must be a confrontation between the Igbo experience of community linked to its spiritual originators and the Christian ecclesial community experience, between the experiences of the two traditions of Word, Rite-Participation, and Healing-Celebration in reconciliation. This confrontation could prove negative, with each then going its own way, or could lead to compenetration, through a dialectic of rejection/acceptance.
- (c) The question raised by each system for the other should lead to self-questioning on each side. For example, the criteria for justifying reconciliation in an individualistic, "my-you" system need to be examined, together with their effectiveness or non-effectiveness for renewing community and society; and the way the individual person and his or her responsibility may be absorbed into a diffused community consciousness, in a community-centred approach, needs to be complemented by a stress on personal conversion. But the main point at issue seems to be the need of the Christian tradition to allow itself to be questioned by other traditions, and not to assume that the western models of reconciliation, with their presupposition that human beings are individualised atoms and not intrinsically caught up in relationships, are the only or even the best ones.

REFERENCES

- (1) Cf. AFER, February, 1983 (Vol. 25, No. 1), pp. 2-5.
- (2) J. Tomko, "La Preparation du Synode des Eveques", in La Documentation Catholique, 20 March 1983, No. 1848, pp. 285-287.
- (3) Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, Jesus, An Experiment in Christology, New York, 1979, Crossroads, pp. 58, 576-582; O. Bimwenyi, Discours theologique negro-africain, Paris 1981, Presence Africaine, pp. 368-384; T. Horvath, "Theologies of non-Christian Religions", in Science et Esprit, XXXIII, pp. 299-322; E. Uzukwu, "Igbo World and Ultimate Reality", in Ultimate Reality and Meaning (Toronto), Vol. V, No. 3, pp. 188-209.
- (4) P. Tillich, Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions, New York 1963, Columbia University Press, pp. 53-73.
- (5) L. Hurbon, Dieu dans le Voudou Haitien, Paris, 1972, Payot.

COLLOQUE MISSIONNAIRE EN FRANCE

(These "convictions" are the fruit of a rich colloquium held in September 1983 at Lyon in preparation for the French National Missionary Congress which will be held at Lisieux in 1984. The speakers were:

Fr. Legrand, MEP, France; Mgr. Patrick d'Souza, Bishop of Benares; Mgr. Tessier, Coadjutor Bishop of Alger; Fr. Eschlimann, SMA, Ivory Coast; Mgr. Nagae, one time Bishop of Uwara, Japan; Fr. Destombes, MEP, Brazil; Fr. Pierre Schouwer, CSSp. Central African Republic. We thank the sisters of Our Lady of the Apostles for sharing this account.)

Un colloque de théologie missionnaire s'est tenu à LYON en septembre dernier. Parmi les 49 participants, essentiellement des missionnaires (évêques, prêtres, religieuses et laïcs), venant de 22 pays des 5 continents, se trouvait Sr AnneMarie PARBE, Sr. Marciana O'KEEFE, en visite en FRANCE, ainsi que d'autres soeurs, ont participé à la journée à la journée "portes ouvertes" de cette rencontre.)

Ce colloque avait été organisé en préparation au Congrès Missionnaire National de FRANCE qui se tiendra en 1984 à LISIEUX. Il avait pour but de préciser et expliquer les aspects multiples de la Mission, trop souvent mal connue et donnant lieu à des réflexions simplistes, irritantes et injustes.

Le travail de réflexion a abouti à l'expression de CONVICTIONS qui nous semblent bien rejoindre notre idée de la Mission. Nous vous les présentons, pensant qu'elles pourront nous aider dans la recherche et l'approfondissement de notre charisme missionnaire que nous avons à poursuivre sans cesse, et particulièrement durant cette première étape de notre programmation.

C O N V I C T I O N S

1. L'Evangile est la Bonne Nouvelle décisive pour tout homme et tout peuple. Malgré la position de minorité et la faiblesse de l'Eglise, notre présence au milieu d'autres peuples a renforcé en nous la conviction que l'Evangile est décisif pour tout homme.

L'homme peut être sauvé à travers sa religion - c'est le souci de Dieu - mais nous croyons que nous n'avons pas le droit de garder pour nous la Bonne Nouvelle de Jésus-Christ.

Nous reconnaissons en nous un dynamisme de l'Esprit qui nous pousse, et nous voyons le même Esprit vivre et agir en ceux que nous rencontrons.

Nous croyons que tout chrétien est appelé à témoigner ainsi de Jésus-Christ: il ne s'agit pas d'abord d'une activité officielle ou spécialisée, il s'agit de mettre dans la rencontre avec autrui le meilleur de nous-mêmes.

2. La tâche de l'Eglise, peuple de Dieu, est d'annoncer la Bonne Nouvelle de Jésus-Christ.

*Les Chrétiens entrent ainsi dans la mission du Christ:
Partout où ils rejoignent l'action de l'Esprit par laquelle le monde devient ce qu'il est appelé à être;
Chaque fois qu'ils s'engagent avec les autres hommes dans les gestes qui font venir le Royaume de Dieu.*

L'Eglise est signe du Royaume de Dieu pour le monde de différentes manières.

L'annonce de Jésus-Christ peut atteindre son sommet dans une proclamation explicite, quand le temps est venu, en réponse à une demande, à un désir implicite, là où existe une possibilité d'accueil.

Mais l'essentiel de la tâche de l'Eglise se réalise aussi là où les chrétiens, en lien avec l'Eglise, s'engagent dans les tâches par lesquelles vient le Règne de Dieu: "Car le Règne de Dieu ne se réalise pas seulement là où les hommes acceptent le baptême. Il vient aussi partout où l'homme est engagé dans sa véritable vocation, partout où il est aimé, partout où il crée des communautés dans lesquelles on apprend à aimer: familles, associations, nations. Il vient partout où le pauvre est traité comme un homme, partout où les adversaires se réconcilient, partout où la justice est promue, où la paix s'établit, où la vérité, la beauté et le bien grandissent l'homme" (Déclaration des Evêques d'Afrique du Nord).

3. L'Evangelisation est le témoignage de l'immense tendresse de Dieu incarnée ici et maintenant.

Nous sommes amenés à remettre en question nos représentations d'un Dieu "puissant". Le travail au milieu d'autres peuples nous révèle la force d'un Dieu caché.

4. L'Evangelisation est une tâche plus grande que nous.

*Elle a sa source dans la Parole de Dieu.
Elle porte la marque de la mort et de la résurrection du Christ.
L'Esprit de Dieu nous précède toujours.*

Nous ne sommes pas maîtres de l'action que nous menons.

L'imprévu dans les échecs et les réussites nous apprend concrètement que le mystère de Jésus-Christ mort et ressuscité est au coeur de la tâche de l'Eglise.

5. La vie au service de l'Evangile est une aventure qui façonne le coeur de ceux qui s'y engagent.

Le témoin de l'Evangile est un voyageur dont la vocation est la rencontre.

"Progressivement, le témoin de l'Evangile s'imprègne de l'humanité du peuple qui l'accueille et, ce faisant, il est placé devant les choix fondamentaux de l'Evangile et donne sa réponse aux questions les plus radicales de Jésus à ses Apôtres.

"Témoigner de l'Evangile est un acte de foi en l'humilité de Dieu qui déploie sa puissance dans notre faiblesse, mais aussi foi en la grandeur de l'homme dont tout l'acharnement du mal lui-même ne vient jamais à bout.

"Le témoin de l'Évangile est l'homme de la double appartenance, du déchirement permanent, de l'échelle de valeurs constamment remise en cause. Le cœur du message d'un témoin de l'Évangile est: 'Allons ensemble plus loin'.

"Par son témoin, le Christ adresse à chacun un message: 'Tu comptes à mes yeux, je viens vivre avec toi!'

"Le témoin de l'Évangile se heurte sans cesse au mystère de la toute-puissance de Dieu constamment mise en échec. C'est l'expérience de Jésus pendant sa passion.

"Le témoin de l'Évangile, c'est un voyageur dont la vocation est la Rencontre: avec les autres que l'on invite à faire un bout de route ensemble, à vivre le partage; avec le Seigneur que je crois être le Seul à pouvoir guider ma vie et combler mon cœur".

(un missionnaire de Chine)

6. Chercher à rencontrer les autres est partie intégrante de la foi Chrétienne en l'Incarnation.

Même si leur désir de dialogue n'est pas toujours partagé, les chrétiens ne peuvent s'empêcher d'aller à la rencontre des autres dans la variété des cultures et des religions (Inde, Chine, Japon, Afrique, Islam...)

Selon la logique de leur foi, la recherche de Dieu passe par la rencontre et le service d'autrui. Le dynamisme de l'Église, qui la pousse à dépasser toutes les frontières, est l'écho de cet amour qui a poussé Dieu à venir vers nous partager notre existence.

7. L'essentiel de la tâche de l'Église est de travailler à mettre l'homme debout. Le salut qu'elle annonce est pour tout l'homme.

- *Nous avons le droit et le devoir de lutter contre les obstacles à l'amour.*
- *Nous ne pouvons rester indifférents à la détresse du monde.*
- *Nous avons à être porteurs d'espérance.*
- *Nous devons prendre avec les autres les chemins de la libération.*

Cette tâche s'accomplit par le dialogue et parfois par l'affrontement. Cette conviction mobilise des hommes, des communautés, des églises, dans tous les continents.

Nous sommes conscients de la pauvreté de nos moyens et de nos propres déficiences. Mais nous croyons qu'au cœur des initiatives de développement et de libération, est à l'œuvre la puissance de l'amour de Dieu.

8. L'option préférentielle pour les pauvres est la forme actuelle de l'espérance que l'Église apporte au monde.

Les églises d'Amérique Latine se sont engagées sur ce chemin (Puebla) et le même appel lance des chrétiens et des communautés du monde entier sur une route qui parfois conduit au sacrifice de la vie.

9. Toute église vit dans une situation politique. A elle d'en tirer les conséquences.

L'Église n'a pas pour vocation de faire de la politique.

Mais elle cherche à poursuivre la mission libératrice de Jésus dans un contexte politique qu'elle ne peut ignorer et où elle doit se situer.

Aussi est-il important pour les témoins de l'Evangile de saisir les enjeux des mécanismes économiques et socio-politiques, et d'agir en conséquence dans l'esprit de l'Evangile.

10. Une tâche essentielle de l'Eglise est d'enraciner l'Evangile dans la spécificité de chaque culture et l'histoire de chaque peuple.

Une écoute attentive et respectueuse de chaque culture, une analyse de la situation socio-économique de chaque peuple, sont une démarche indispensable à toute évangélisation, car la naissance d'une Eglise n'est pas importation d'un modèle préfabriqué ni adaptation de ce modèle, mais incarnation de l'Evangile dans le génie de cette culture et l'histoire de ce peuple.

Chaque Eglise doit contribuer ainsi à l'édification du Royaume de Dieu dans l'unité de sa diversité.

11. La théologie doit pouvoir se formler dans le langage de chaque culture; elle s'élabore à partir de la vie du Peuple de Dieu car la vie et l'action précèdent la théologie.

Seul un contact étroit avec la base nous permet de discerner ce que vit le peuple chrétien et nous évite de manier, sans prudence, un discours universel.

C'est la démarche de la théologie de la libération en Amérique Latine, de la théologie indienne, de la théologie africaine qui se cherche....

12. La démarche d'évangélisation consiste à emprunter le chemin de l'amitié et du partage de la vie.

La démarche d'amitié avec ceux qui nous accueillent, le partage de leur existence, la solidarité avec leur destin désamorcent toute volonté de puissance.

Cette amitié et ce partage de vie, plus que des paroles, témoignent du vrai visage du Dieu dont nous sommes les envoyés.

13. Notre dynamisme d'évangélisation a sa source dans la prière, la méditation, et non dans des techniques d'évangélisation, des "outils".

La prière enracinée dans la vie et la culture d'un peuple est une contribution capitale à l'avènement de l'homme nouveau en Jésus Christ.

La prière partagée, la souffrance, en particulier celle de ceux qui sont en prison, comme l'amitié, soutiennent le témoin de l'Evangile dans son dynamisme. Elle est aussi expérience prophétique de libération, expression de l'unité d'amour.

14. La force de l'Eglise n'est pas dans la rigueur de sa discipline mais dans la parole de Dieu, dans la mesure où elle se fait proche des hommes.

La proximité aux hommes dans l'oeuvre d'évangélisation prépare une modification de l'exercice de l'autorité dans l'Eglise: cette autorité devient, de plus en plus, service.

15. L'approfondissement de la notion d'évangélisation impose une formation adéquate des évangélistes et une évolution permanente de leur praxis.

16. L'avenir de l'évangélisation passe par l'échange entre Eglises.

Toute Eglise locale, pour ne pas s'enfermer sur elle-même, a besoin d'être interpellée par d'autres Eglises, d'autres situations.

L'échange entre Eglises provoque un approfondissement et un enrichissement mutuels.

Pour un échange plus fructueux entre Eglises, l'effort de décentralisation doit se poursuivre.

Le dynamisme des jeunes Eglises doit être partagé aux autres.

L'Eglise qui a reçu doit donner à son tour.

17. L'expérience de la diversité des cultures et des situations, les changements profonds auxquels nous avons été amenés dans notre tâche nous font affirmer que:

l'Esprit n'a pas fini de nous surprendre.

Ref: Compte Rendu du Colloque.

- fin -

JUSTICE AND FAITH WORKSHOP

September 3 - December 15, 1984

The workshop will provide opportunity for missionaries, laity, clergy and religious to reflect on their commitment and involvement on behalf of justice whether in the Third or First World.

Working in situations of poverty, oppression or repression makes new and special demands. The workshop will explore both these demands and the links between Faith and work for Justice. Emphasis will also be given to recognising and developing the supports needed for involvement in the promotion of Peace and Justice.

While outside resource people will be available, the workshop process will draw heavily on the sharing of experience, expertise and insight by the community of participants.

The workshop is open to men and women. Admission by application.

Application forms and further enquiries from:

Fr. Eamonn O'Brien, S.S.C.,
St. Columban's College,
Dalgan Park,
Navan,
Co. Meath
Ireland.

- end -

'NINYO' AQUINO - FURTHER EXCERPT FROM A PERSONAL LETTER

(Written on his 270th day in prison, where he spent almost eight years in solitary confinement in the Philippines.)

I do not know what will happen to me. I have not been charged and this is now my ninth month in captivity. But I am no longer hoping to be released because I know I won't stay free for long as long as the present dictatorship does not change. The moment I am released and I am interviewed, I know I will be rushed back to my cell because I am my worst enemy because I have not learned how to keep my tongue in check with prudence.

I marveled at your serenity during the months we were together. I think I have found your secret. You have long ago resigned to His will. I, too, am now resigned to His will. I now trust strongly in Him and have perfect hope in His mercy. Like you, I heard Him say: "When you think all is lost, the greater reward often follows: All is not lost, though some things happen contrary to your will. You should not think of yourself wholly forsaken by Me, though I send you for a time some grief and trouble, for this is the surer way to the Kingdom of Heaven."

And when He sent His disciples to the world, He sent them not to have temporal joys but to meet the great battles; not to have honours, but injuries; not to be idle, but to labour; not to rest, but to bring forth much fruit in patience and in good works, according to a Kempis.

And these words are true and cannot be denied.

In the loneliness of my solitary confinement in Laur, in the depths of my solitude and desolation, during those long hours of meditations, I found my inner peace. He stood me face to face with myself and forced me to look at my emptiness and nothingness, and then helped me discover Him who has really never left my side; but because pride shielded my eyes and the lust for earthly and temporal power, honour and joys drugged my mind, I failed to notice Him.

As Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "For the sake of Christ I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong." To this, I say, Amen. Forgive me for having taken too much of your time with this long letter. But with nothing else to do, with all the time in my hands, the temptation to over-write is great, to over-pray, to over think. If I have been too harsh in my judgement of our colleagues, I pray for their forgiveness. If I, however, understated the truth of our tragedy and have been wanting in my denunciation of the tyrant who dragged back Mother Filipinas to her dungeon in chains, I hope God will forgive me for failing to rise up to the occasion.

I hope you are in the best of health and Ate Meding and the family have been freed from their anxiety and tension. I do not know when you will have the chance to read this letter. But I could not wait to put down in writing my gratitude to a man who inspired me, when hope was almost gone, the 'monsignor' who steeled me with a faith that has become my 'refuge and my staff'.

So long, dear friend, I am sure we will meet again. If not here, in that Kingdom where love is eternal.

Sincerely,

(Sgd.) NINYO

Postscript: Ninoy Aquino was assassinated on Aug. 21, this year, upon his return from self-exile in the US. Ref. Human Society Monograph, Sept. 1983.

AFRICA'S OPAQUE REALITY:
MARXISM AND CHRISTIANITY

EXCERPTS FROM PRO MUNDI VITA DOSSIER 1982/No.4

Harry Hoeben.

As a political, economic and social system socialism is no longer in its infancy in Africa. At one time or another many, if not most, African governments claimed to aim at "socialist" goals. Very soon it became fashionable to speak of "African socialism" and at present the name is "scientific socialism" or "Marxism-Leninism". However, there is no agreement on the precise contents of these various concepts of socialism.

A POLICY OF DRIFT OR A COURSE OF ACTION

In coming to terms with a specific reality the Church should not confine itself to a theoretical or doctrinal debate. From the point of view of the regimes such a debate would lead to a dead end: officially "religion" is an enemy of people. However, in practice these regimes often interpret the official position according to the circumstances. While it is useless to debate theoretical issues, it is very advantageous for church leaders to discuss with the regime specific matters of pragmatic, national importance in which the Church has experience and resources. It is very painful when in such circumstances the Church's past practices are scrutinized and denounced and much patience, understanding and wisdom are needed. Church leaders should ask themselves "whether the opposition is really directed against religious values or against perceived structures of power and wealth and an attitude of foreignness and lack of sympathy for the new regime. Such may well be the perceived image of the Church." In any case it is useless for the Church and for the people to drift along with events. If this would be the Church's attitude it very soon would be overtaken by more aggressive forces that, even indirectly cannot be influenced, controlled or opposed.

For all practical purposes the only option left open to church leaders is to pursue a cooperative action with the government at least in as far as the principles of faith and the good of the community allows it. In areas where the Church's competence is beyond question, there should reign an atmosphere of realism, constructive imagination and loyal cooperation.

PRINCIPLES TO BE KEPT IN MIND

Four major factors will determine the praxis:

1. African Marxist states have entrusted the tasks of generating the national revolution to a *vanguard party*, or, at least, to a *vanguard movement*. Because of its predominance all other community movements (youth, students, women), unions and cooperatives are *horizontally* inserted into the revolutionary process. Moreover, political cadres strongly advocate class analysis for the identification and exclusion

of *internal* enemies. Because practising Christians are presupposed to obstruct this class analysis they are excluded from party membership. Active church members are supposed to support a non-revolutionary and by this very fact a contra-revolutionary ideology.

2. The revolution has created its own elite, whose members fear bishops and other church leaders who, in their eyes, have the appearance, if not the characteristics of an established elite. They feel that the ecclesiastical leaders because of their authority occupy a position of power. Moreover the church leaders belong to a well structured, strong and exclusive body and, therefore, they are supposed to have influence also on the political level. Finally, because of the international structures of the Churches and the international connections of church leaders, the latter are felt to escape national control. The new elite feels the need to attack such "privileges" and to limit the influence of church leaders by new political and ideological regulations thus creating new internal ties and limiting external influence.
3. African Marxist states claim to accept the Marxist-Leninist criticism of the world order in which the proletarian exploited are pitted against the capitalist exploiters. A new and just society can be created only by giving control over the means of production to the working class, thus eliminating the exploitation of man by man. However, to all appearances, *these bombastic statements refer less to a dogmatic position than to a convenient orientation.* Moreover, although these regimes claim to start from a Marxist-Leninist model and vociferously declare their solidarity with the whole socialist world, *in practice they assert just as vigorously that they want to realize the revolution in their own way.*
4. African church leaders should admit that they are easily upset by the Marxist vocabulary which to them is totally alien and, in a sense, even offensive. Only church leaders, who are willing to familiarize themselves with this jargon and become competent in its use, will be capable of dialoguing effectively with Marxists on a practical level. Within the framework of such a dialogue the Church is urged to provide new and specifically Christian interpretations to the issues of change, social equality, liberation and the fight against oppression.

The following questions deserve careful consideration:

1. *To whom is the Church addressing itself in these countries?*
The answer is obvious and simple: the people. But because it is so obvious, the fact is easily overlooked that these people are being educated and/or constantly subjected to Marxist propaganda. Therefore the Church should address itself to the issues which dominate public opinion.
2. *What kind of message should the Church bring in these circumstances?*
The Church's calling does not depend on circumstances; it is the Church's task to preach the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. However, that message will be accepted only if it addresses itself to the needs of the listeners in such a manner that they can understand it. Therefore the major challenge for the Church will be the contextualization of its message to the societal environment.
3. *What should be the goal of the Church?*
Ultimately the Church has only one aim: to witness to a vision of faith in which God, the universe and man generate a totality of love. This world vision necessarily contrasts with the materialistic outlook

of Marxism, but presented in an attractive manner, it might open up avenues of dialogue.

4. In what way can the Church express itself effectively? The answer to this

question is narrowly linked to the Church's understanding of its mission as part of the community. The Church cannot exist and operate apart from the community. Therefore it will have to adopt the community's language and vocabulary.

CHRISTIAN ORIENTATIONS

What ever the social, political, economic or cultural circumstances the Church should strive at becoming an *integrated* Church. The best means of achieving this ideal in a Marxist environment *may* well be the proclamation of the Church's message through a network of small Christian communities. These communities can fulfil this task most efficiently because they respect the party/government's totalitarian claim on structures and organizations. At the same time these communities stress the personal responsibility of church members and efficaciously propagate the message of a just society built on solidarity and equality. While integrating themselves into society church members no doubt will also *fight against atheism*, not only the "doctrinal" atheism of scientific socialism but also the "hidden" atheism of the capitalist system which aims at unlimited production/consumption to the benefit of a privileged minority and at the cost of all.

Thus Marxism may become less of a rival and more of a challenge to the Church in Africa. Continuous reflection and determined community efforts to discern the Gospel demands in specific situations may prove to be a boost for:

1. A Christian theology in an African context. The Church must always be "ready with its defence whenever called to account for the hope that is in it"(cf.1 Peter 3:15). In present-day Africa this hope will surely reflect man's desire for *total* liberation and social justice, two themes which deserve to be part and parcel of African Christian reflection and catechesis.
2. African Christian practice, urging African Christians to live what they preach, to be idealists of truth and ultimate hope. In a revolutionary setting the practice of poverty, simplicity and sharing may particularly well express the Gospel's fullness. The Church can authenticate this practice by accepting "an evangelical approach to nationalization: 'if any one would see you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well' (Mt.5.40)". This, no doubt, would be a sign of the Church's integration.
3. An African public diakonia. The Church cannot give exclusive support to any political or economic system. Likewise it cannot remain silent in the face of structural violence and/or injustice. In all circumstances it has to put God's interest above its own. Its proclamation has to be a service characterized by moderation, and the "kerygma" of its members has to adapt itself to specific situations. It is not the task of the Church or its leaders to mobilize the masses for a *revolution*: this is precisely the monopoly of political leaders. Within such a context the primary task of the Church may be to respect both the principle of subsidiarity and the directives of legitimate authority.

Ref. Pro Mundi Vita: Dossiers , 1982/4.